

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LENDING 00256 181424Z

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ACTION OPR-02

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FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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EO 11652N/A

TAGS: AART, UR

SUBJ: ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM: CONDITION REPORT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. AMERICAN ART EXPERT RECOMMENDS ONE PAINTING IN RESIDENCE BE RETURNED TO NATIONAL GALLERY FOR RENOVATION. REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. MR. BENJAMIN JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION LABORATORY AT LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM, RECENTLY ACCOMPANIED SHIPMENT OF AMERICAN PAINTINGS TO LENINGRAD FOR DISPLAY AT HERMITAGE MUSEUM IN EXHIBIT ENTITLED "AMERICAN AND WEST EUROPEAN PAINTINGS FROM AMERICAN MUSEUMS." CONSUL GENERAL TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HIS PRESENCE TO ASK HIM TO INSPECT PAINTINGS FROM NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART IN RESIDENCE ON LOAN.

3. JOHNSON FOUND ALL PAINTINGS IN GOOD CONDITION WITH ONE EXCEPTION--GEORGE CATLIN'S "VIEW OF THE GRAND DETOUR" (NO. 1259). AS INDICATED ON CONGEN CONDITION REPORT DATED NOVEMBER 21, 1975, FABRIC AT CENTER OF PICTURE IS LOOSENED. JOHNSON SAID THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL ON CASUAL EXAMINATION WHETHER THIS REFLECTED CANVAS COMING LOOSE FROM MASONITE BACKING OR PAINT SEPARATING FROM CANVAS. IN EITHER CASE BUT PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF LATTER POSSIBILITY, HE RECOMMENDED THAT PAINTING BE RETURNED TO NATIONAL GALLERY FOR PROMPT ATTENTION.

4. JOHNSON OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD BE PITY TO DAMAGE
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PAGE 02 LENDING 00256 181424Z

INTEGRITY OF COLLECTION, WHICH HE THOUGHT ADMIRABLE,
AND SUGGESTED THAT NATIONAL GALLERY SHOULD BE ABLE TO

PROVIDE REPLACEMENT CATLIN IN SAME SIZE FRAME. HE NOTED THAT A REPRESENTATIVE OF NATIONAL GALLERY (WHICH HAS PAINTINGS IN HERMITAGE EXHIBIT) WOULD SHORTLY BE COMING TO LENINGRAD TO OVERSEE TRANSFER OF ENTIRE EXHIBIT TO MOSCOW FOR NEXT SHOWING. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR THIS REPRESENTATIVE TO BRING THE REPLACEMENT CATLIN WITH HIM AND SUPERVISE PACKING OF "GRAND DETOUR" FOR RETURN TO NATIONAL GALLERY.

5. JOHNSON FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT, IF NATIONAL GALLERY PREFERRED TO REPAIR "GRAND DETOUR" AND SEND IT BACK TO LENINGRAD, HE WOULD PERHAPS BE ABLE TO BRING IT BACK WITH HIM IN AUGUST WHEN HE EXPECTS TO RETURN TO SOVIET UNION TO SUPERVISE RETURN OF EXHIBIT TO U.S.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY ON RETURN OF "GRAND DETOUR" AND INFORMATION ON POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT.
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